

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6487

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14783

E.O.11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: BRITISH POST-MORTEM ON
SUNNINGDALE CONFERENCE

REF: LONDON 14542

BEGIN SUMMARY. ON DECEMBER 12 FCO REPUBLIC OF IRELAND
DEPARTMENT HEAD, WHITE, WHO WAS MEMBER OF BRITISH
DELEGATION AT RECENT TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE AT
SUNNINGDALE, GAVE US A RUNDOWN ON HOW IT DEVELOPED.
WHITE'S ACCOUNT PARALLELED CLOSELY WHAT HAS APPEARED IN
THE PRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. WHITE WENT OVER THE SUNNINGDALE COMMUNIQUE WITH US
IN SOME DETAIL. MOST OF WHAT HE HAD TO SAY HAS APPEARED
IN VARIOUS ACCOUNTS IN THE PRESS, BUT THE FOLLOWING
POINTS SEEM TO US OF PARTICULAR INTEREST.

2. HEATH'S ROLE--THE QUESTION OF FINDING A CONFERENCE
CHAIRMAN ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES WAS FINESSED BY A
TACIT AGREEMENT FOR HEATH TO ACT AS INFORMAL CHAIRMAN.
WHITE THOUGHT HEATH DID THIS VERY WELL, SHOWING TACT AND
A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SENSIBILITIES AND NUANCES OF
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POSITION OF ALL PARTIES INVOLVED. THOUGH PROVIDING

ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP TO THE BRITISH DELEGATION, HEATH EXERCISED RESTRAINT IN PRESENTING BRITISH POSITIONS. WHEN THE ISSUES WERE CONTENTIOUS, HE EITHER REFERRED THEM TO SUBCOMMITTEES OR CALLED ON ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE BRITISH DELEGATION TO STATE THE BRITISH CASE. THIS KEPT TEMPERATURES DOWN AND PERMITTED A CONSTRUCTIVE ATMOSPHERE.

3. WHITE SAID THAT PRECONFERENCE CONSULTATION HAD RESULTED IN BASIC AGREEMENT ON A NUMBER OF MATTERS SUCH AS THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND'S BASIC MEMBERSHIP AND STRUCTURE. DESPITE SOME IRISH RELUCTANCE, IT WAS ALSO UNDERSTOOD BEFORE THE CONFERENCE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO SPELL OUT IN DETAIL ALL OF THE COI'S FUNCTIONS. INSTEAD IT WAS AGREED TO SET UP SPECIAL STUDY GROUPS TO EXAMINE AREAS WHERE THE COI MIGHT USEFULLY ACT--FOR EXAMPLE IN DECISIONS RELATING TO THE EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE, COOPERATION IN TRADE AND INDUSTRY, ETC.

4. THE BIG PROBLEMS THAT HAD TO BE DEALT WITH AT THE CONFERENCE, WHITE SAID, WERE THOSE OF "STATUS" (IRISH RECOGNITION OF NI), "EXTRADITION" AND "POLICING." SUFFICIENT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED IN ADVANCE FOR THE QUESTION OF STATUS TO BE RESOLVED FAIRLY QUICKLY USING THE FORMULA QUOTED IN REFTEL. EXTRADITION AND POLICING PROVED MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. THE IRISH AT FIRST INSISTED THAT THEY WOULD BE UNABLE FOR LEGAL REASONS TO AGREE TO EXTRADITION OF INDIVIDUALS ACCUSED OF POLITICAL OFFENSES IN NI. OLIVER NAPIER (CATHOLIC CHAIRMAN OF ALLIANCE PARTY) INTERVENED IN THE STRONGEST TERMS TO SAY THAT IF THE IRISH COULD NOT FIND A WAY TO PUT MURDERERS IN JAIL, THE ALLIANCE PARTY WOULD HAVE NOTHING FURTHER TO DO WITH THE CONFERENCE AND WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE COI. THIS IMPORTANT INTERVENTION LED TO THE IRISH COMMITMENT TO STUDY THE WHOLE QUESTION OF EXTRADITION FURTHER AND TO TAKE "IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE" LEGAL STEPS TO BRING TO TRIAL ALL THOSE ACCUSED OF MURDER IN NI "HOWEVER MOTIVATED." A PART OF THIS AGREEMENT WAS THAT "POLITICAL" MURDERERS WOULD BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE SOUTH BEFORE SPECIAL TRIBUNALS TO ASSURE THAT SYMPATHETIC IRISH JURIES WOULD NOT LET THEM OFF, AS HAS BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST. WHITE CONSIDERED THIS AN IMPORTANT IRISH CONCESSION, THOUGH A GREAT DEAL OF FURTHER STUDY OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF A JOINT LAW ENFORCEMENT AREA, A COI COURT, LEGAL JURISDICTIONS, ETC., REMAINS TO BE DONE.

5. WHITE SAID THAT THE MOST DIFFICULT ISSUE HAD PROVED TO BE POLICING. THE IRISH AND SDLP BASICALLY WANTED THE ULTIMATE CONTROL OF POLICE AUTHORITIES IN BOTH PARTS OF IRELAND TO RESIDE IN THE COI. THIS WENT FAR BEYOND WHAT WAS CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE TO THE NI UNION-

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ISTS AND THE BRITISH, FOR A VARIETY OF PRACTICAL AS WELL AS POLITICAL REASONS. A DELAY IN REACHING COMPROMISE ON THIS ISSUE WAS THE FACTOR WHICH CAUSED THE UNEXPECTED PROLONGATION OF THE CONFERENCE FOR AN EXTRA DAY. IN THE END, IN RETURN FOR IRISH AGREEMENT TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE TO THE NI PROTESTANT COMMUNITY OF LEAVING THE RUC PRETTY MUCH AS IS, THE BRITISH AND UNIONISTS CONCEDED THAT APPOINTMENTS TO THE NI POLICE AUTHORITY WOULD BE MADE IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COI. WHITE THOUGHT THIS WAS A CONSIDERABLE GENUFLECTION IN THE DIRECTION OF IRISH CONCERNS ABOUT THE POLICE. TO MOLLIFY THE UNIONISTS, THE BRITISH WILL CONSIDER DEVOLVING NORMAL (NON-SECURITY?) POLICE FUNCTIONS TO THE NI EXECUTIVE AT AN EARLIER DATE THAN THEY WERE PREVIOUSLY PREPARED TO DO. GIVEN THE EMOTIONAL CONTENT OF THIS ISSUE, WHITE THOUGHT THAT IT HAD BEEN A REASONABLY SATISFACTORY OUTCOME.

6. WHITE CONFIRMED OUR IMPRESSION THAT THROUGHOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS THE UNIONISTS HAD FELT THE HOT BREATH OF ULSTER'S LOYALISTS ON THEIR NECKS AND WERE, AS A CONSEQUENCE, LESS PREPARED TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS. HOWEVER, HE SAID IT WAS ALSO CLEAR THAT THE UNIONISTS COULD NOT GO HOME EMPTY-HANDED AND THIS HAD PROVIDED AN IMPETUS TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS WHEN THE GOING GOT CONFIDENTIAL

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TOUGH.

7. WHITE SAID THAT THE TIMETABLE NOW CALLS FOR THE BRITISH TO DEVOLVE POWER TO THE NI EXECUTIVE (THUS FORMALLY BRINGING IT INTO EXISTENCE) ON JANUARY 1, 1974. A FORMAL CONFERENCE TO ESTABLISH THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND WILL TAKE PLACE SOME TIME EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR, WHITE THOUGHT IT LIKELY NOT MUCH BEFORE FEBRUARY OR MARCH. FINALLY, WHITE SAID THE BRITISH ARE GENUINELY VERY PLEASED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE. NO ONE CAN DENY THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS THAT CONTINUE TO EXIST OR THE POSSIBILITY OF FAILURE. BUT THE SITUATION IN NI HAS CHANGED IRREVOCABLY AND TO THE BRITISH THE ROAD AHEAD LOOKS IMMEASURABLY BRIGHTER THAN IT HAS FOR A LONG TIME.

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